

My four children and I decided that this year we would all go to the Queens Memorial Day parade and ceremony. I had not been back to Brooklyn (where I was born and had lived as a child) for many years. The children wanted to see the houses I had lived in, the schools and church I had attended. I had never been to the Remsen Cemetery - the little old family cemetery where some of my ancestors had been buried. The whole family wanted to visit the scenes of my childhood and the Remsen cemetery. We also wanted to walk and worship where our ancestors had been.

Saturday we spent visiting these childhood scenes. We were able to enter the church in which I had worshipped as a child. We walked on Remsen Street in Brooklyn Heights, Middagh Street, and Rapelje Street. These streets were named after ancestors of mine who were the earliest settlers in New Netherlands.

Historically, my seventh great-grandfather and grandmother, Joris de Rapelje and Catalina Trico, were Walloons, whose families had fled from France at the time of the 16th century religious wars in that country. They eventually arrived in the Netherlands. When the Dutch West Indies Company planted their first colony in the New World in 1624, Joris and Catalina were among the passengers on the ship "Unity." Their daughter, Sarah, was the first white girl born in the New Netherlands. Sarah was a grandmother of mine. Their third daughter, Jannette, was also a grandmother of mine. Jannette married Rem Jansen Vanderbeeck, who came to this country about 1640.

Rem Jansen Vanderbeeck and Jannette Rapalje lived at the Wallabout (This is now Brooklyn Heights) and reared a family of fifteen children. One of these children was named Abraham. The children of Rem Jansen Vanderbeeck took the name of Remsen. This was the old Dutch custom. Abraham was known as Abraham son of Rem, or Abraham Rem's son - which became Remsen.

When Abraham married Anna Aertsen Middaugh, he and his wife moved to Newtown. This location was exactly what the name implied - a new town. Abraham and his family were extensive land holders in that region of Queens county. Newtown eventually became part of what is now known as the Borough of Queens, City of New York. Abraham Remsen and his wife Anna Aertsen Middaugh, are two of the people buried in the old Remsen cemetery.